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REMARKS

In the Office Action dated March 18, 2003, claims 31-33 were said to be withdrawn from further consideration. Claims 12 and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, first paragraph. Claim 23 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Claim 10 was similarly rejected. Claims 1-30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hirano. For the reasons outlined in detail below, it is respectfully submitted that the pending claims patentably define over the cited art.

In paragraph three of the Office Action on page 2, it was stated that claims 12 and 21 are rejected under § 112. More particularly, it was stated in paragraph 4 that it may be possible for two of the smallest diameter coins to enter a single aperture if the largest coin handled is larger than two of the smallest coin diameters added together. In response, applicant notes that if the largest diameter coin were to have a diameter which is larger than the two smallest coin diameters added together, then such largest diameter coin would not fit in any of the plurality of apertures in the separating wheel recited in claim 12. In other words, claim 12 specifies that each of the plurality of apertures in the separating wheel has to have a diameter which is smaller than the combined diameter of two of the smallest diameter ones of the coins meant to be sorted. By definition, therefore, the largest

diameter coin which is capable of being accommodated in the apertures of the separating wheel cannot have a diameter which is larger than the combined diameters of two of the smallest diameter coins meant to be sorted. If the coin is larger, it will not fit within the apertures. In view of the foregoing, applicant cannot see a need to revise the wording in claims 12 and 21. However, should the Examiner have any suggestions or proposals in this regard, he is encouraged to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

In paragraph 6 of the Office Action, on page 3, claim 23 was rejected. In response, applicant has revised the wording of claim 23 to clarify what is meant in lines 11-13. More particularly, the trailing edge of the separating wheel at least one coin receiving aperture is so shaped as to allow an associated coin held in the at least one coin receiving aperture to contact the rolling surface before the associated coin reaches the at least one coin sorting aperture. This can be seen in, e.g., Figure 6 of the drawings.

As to claim 10, applicant has amended that claim to replace "coin slide" with "--sorted coin container--" since the language has been previously introduced into the claim. Therefore, claim 10 as now revised does not suffer from any antecedent basis problems.

More substantively, claims 1-30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over

Hirano. Hirano was said to disclose a coin hopper 32, a sorted coin container 22 positioned below the coin hopper and a coin slide positioned below the coin hopper. Hirano was also said to disclose a coin separating and sorting assembly (see Figure 3) located between the coin hopper and the coin slide. The coin separating and sorting assembly was said to comprise a separating wheel 40 including at least one coin receiving aperture and a toroidal flange 37 extending away from a face of the separating wheel.

Hirano was also said to disclose a wheel housing 26 and 38 on which the separating wheel is supported, the wheel housing including a toroidal channel in which the toroidal flange of the separating wheel is accommodated. A coin support surface 38 was said to be provided on one of the separating wheel and the wheel housing. A coin rolling surface 37 was said to be defined on one of the separating wheel and the wheel housing. Finally, at least one coin receiving aperture in the separating wheel was said to include a curved leading edge 50a (Fig. 3) having a radius of curvature only slightly larger than a diameter of the largest size coin meant to be sorted. The rejection of claims 1-30 over Hirano is respectfully traversed.

Hirano, while it shows a coin separating mechanism, does not show a coin sorting mechanism. In other words, Hirano only refers to one size coin C and discloses no structure for sorting coins of different

diameters (and, hence, different denominations) from each other. Rather, Hirano merely refers to a coin dispensing device. Apparently, in Hirano, only similarly sized coins C are dispensed one at a time from a hopper 32 (Figure 1) holding that sized coin. It is respectfully noted that Hirano deals with a coin dispenser for coins used in a gaming machine. It appears as if only one sized coin (or perhaps token) is provided for the gaming machine. As a result, no sorting is needed. Thus, there is no wheel housing in Hirano which includes one or more coin sorting apertures of different sizes as is recited in numerous pending claims.

For example, as to claim 6, Hirano does not disclose "a plurality of sorting apertures of different sizes" as recited therein. Similar language can be found in independent claim 10. Claim 1 has been similarly amended. Since there is no teaching or disclosure in Hirano of a plurality of sorting apertures of different sizes, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 1 and its dependent claims 2-5, independent claim 6 and its dependent claims 7-9, and, independent claim 10 and its dependent claims 11-13 all patentably define over Hirano, as well as the rest of the art of record.

As to claim 14, this claim recites a wheel housing comprising at least one sorting aperture which is sized to allow a passage of a coin of a defined maximum

diameter therethrough. Hirano does not disclose a coin housing on which a separating wheel is supported with the housing having at least one sorting aperture therein. Rather, as is evident from, e.g., Figure 2 of Hirano, the support housing or coin receiving plate 38 has no apertures meant to sort coins. The only apertures in the coin receiving plate 38 are screw holes 51 for accommodating screws 44 (col. 5, lines 21-23), none of which are meant for coin sorting.

Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that independent claim 14 also patentably defines over Hirano. Dependent claims 15-18, which merely further patentably define the detailed subject matter of claim 14, are thus similarly patentable.

Claim 19 similarly recites a wheel housing comprising at least one sorting aperture. For this reason, claim 19 is also in condition for allowance. Dependent claims 20-22 merely further patentably define the detailed subject matter of claim 19. Therefore, these claims are also believed to be in condition for allowance over the art of record.

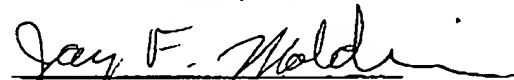
Claim 23 similarly recites a wheel housing comprising at least one sorting aperture. Therefore, this claim is in condition for allowance over the art of record. Dependent claims 24-26, which merely further patentably define the detailed subject matter of claim 23 or each other, are also believed to be patentable over the art of record.

Claim 27 has similarly been amended to recite a wheel housing comprising at least one sorting aperture. Therefore, claim 27, and its dependent claims 28-30 are also believed to be in condition for allowance. It is noted that dependent claims 29 and 30 were amended to bring them into conformance with the recitation of their parent claim and each other.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that the pending claims 1-30 all patentably define over the cited art. Prompt and favorable consideration of these claims is therefore respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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